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United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

Palestine refugees' properties and their revenues

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 68/79. On 21 May 2014, the Secretary-General sent notes verbales to Israel and all other Member States, drawing their attention to the relevant provisions of resolutions 68/76 to 68/80 and requesting information by 10 July 2014 concerning any action taken or envisaged in relation to the implementation of those resolutions. A reply dated 11 June 2014 was received from the Russian Federation, responding to the requests contained in paragraph 4 of resolution 68/77 and paragraph 23 of resolution 68/78. A reply dated 25 June 2014 was received from Mexico, responding to the requests contained in paragraph 4 of resolution 68/77 and paragraph 25 of resolution 68/78. A reply dated 21 July 2014 was received from Israel responding to the requests contained in paragraphs 15 to 19 of resolution 68/78. The full text of the replies is reproduced in the present report. No information has been received from Member States regarding the implementation of resolution 68/79.

* A/69/150.

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1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 6 of General Assembly resolution 68/79 on Palestine refugees' properties and their revenues.

2. On 21 May 2014, the Secretary-General drew the attention of the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations to resolutions 68/76 to 68/80, all of 11 December 2013, with the request that the Permanent Representative inform him by 10 July 2014 of any steps his Government had taken or envisaged taking in the implementation of the relevant provisions of the resolutions.

3. On 21 May 2014, the Secretary-General sent a note verbale to all other Member States, drawing their attention to the relevant provisions of resolutions 68/76 to 68/80 and requesting information by 10 July 2014 regarding any actions taken or envisaged in relation to their implementation.

4. A reply dated 11 June 2014 was received from the Russian Federation, responding to the requests contained in paragraph 4 of resolution 68/77 and paragraph 23 of resolution 68/78. The full text of the reply reads as follows:

[Original: English]

> In August 2013, the Russian Federation contributed $10 million in humanitarian financial aid to Palestine for the purpose of covering current budget expenses.
>
> In April 2013, the Russian Ministry of Emergency Situations delivered to Palestine (by sea to the Israeli port of Ashdod) about 5,000 tons of wheat flour as part of the contribution of the Russian Federation to the fund of the World Food Programme (WFP) ($2 million).
>
> Deliveries of wheat flour to Palestine are expected to continue during the subsequent period as part of the similar contribution of the Russian Federation to the fund of WFP in 2014.
>
> In July 2013, humanitarian aid was provided to Palestinian refugees in Syria in response to the request from the authorities of Palestine. Two planes of the Russian Ministry of Emergency Situations delivered 70 tons of humanitarian assistance (canned meat, baby food, rice, sugar), which were passed to the representatives of the Palestinian Embassy in Syria.
>
> The Russian Federation provides educational assistance through the training of civil specialists. For the 2013/2014 academic year, the Russian Ministry of Education and Science allotted 158 national grants, from the Russian Federal budget, to Palestinian students for complete educational courses as well as for master's degree programmes, postgraduate study and courses of advanced vocational training.
>
> At present, 575 Palestinians are studying technical, humanitarian and medical disciplines in Russia (452 through the State programme and 123 on a compensatory basis). In 2011, 60 employees of the Palestinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs received training at the Diplomatic Academy of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
>
> Palestinian security officers are also attending training courses in Russia.
>
> At present, a multifunctional centre, containing a wrestling gym, a music school and a business centre, is being built in Bethlehem. The possibility is

also being explored for the Russian side to participate in the general reconstruction of Bethlehem's historical and religious centre, particularly around the Church of the Nativity.

5. A reply dated 25 June 2014 was received from Mexico, responding to the requests contained in paragraph 4 of resolution 68/77 and paragraph 25 of resolution 68/78. The full text of the reply reads as follows:

[Original: Spanish]

Mexico recognizes the efforts of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) to improve the living conditions of Palestine refugees by providing basic services, particularly education and health.

The Government of Mexico supports the efforts of UNRWA to meet the needs of the Palestinian population. It has accordingly increased its voluntary contribution to the Agency, which amounted to $100,000 in 2013.

6. A reply dated 21 July 2014 was received from Israel, responding to the request contained in paragraphs 15 to 19 of General Assembly resolution 68/78. The full text of the reply reads as follows:

[Original: English]

While Israel voted, as it did in the past, against these resolutions due to their politicized character and one-sided perspective, the Permanent Mission wishes to reiterate Israel's support for the humanitarian activities of UNRWA.

Despite an ongoing and acute threat to its security, Israel has gone to great lengths to foster conditions for Palestinian economic development and cooperation, approving a substantial number of UNRWA projects and facilitating UNRWA humanitarian assistance to its Palestinian beneficiaries.

Since 2010, 277 international projects have been approved for the benefit of the civilian population in Gaza. As of December 2013, 161 projects of those had been completed and 44 are being implemented.

As of 31 December 2013, 30 UNRWA projects had been approved, of which 24 had not yet been implemented on the ground by UNRWA. In 2013, UNRWA completed the construction of 30 new school buildings.

The Government of Israel has taken further steps to facilitate the crossing of both people and goods in and out of the Gaza Strip. All civilian goods are allowed into Gaza, with the exception of weapons and "dual use" items — items that can easily be appropriated for terrorist activities. During 2013, 59,883 truckloads of goods entered Gaza, among these were 2,311 truckloads of medical supplies, and 560 truckloads of goods, spices, fruits, vegetables and flowers were exported from Gaza through Israel to Europe.

Notwithstanding ongoing security threats posed by Hamas rule in Gaza, 2013 showed an increase in the number of Palestinians entering Israel. In this regard, during 2013, 69,323 Palestinians crossed to Israel through Erez Terminal and over 1 million Palestinians from the West Bank entered Israel during Ramadan.

High priority is given to humanitarian cases. Israel is doing its utmost to facilitate the entry of patients in need of medical treatment. In 2013, 13,734 medical permits for Gaza Palestinians were granted, a 40 per cent increase compared to 2012. In this regard, Israel also works closely with the Palestinian Ministry of Health to support the medical needs of the Palestinian population in the West Bank. In 2013, 225,410 medical-related permits were issued, 100,145 for patients, 121,967 for family members accompanying patients and 3,298 for visiting patients receiving treatment in Israel. In addition, Israel promotes the development of the Palestine health system through several different programmes and training. In 2013, 2,314 Palestinian doctors, nurses and other medical health-care professionals attended the 159 courses, conventions and programmes that Israel hosted.

In 2013, the Government of Israel continued taking steps to ease security-related restrictions in the West Bank. Roadblocks were removed throughout Judea and Samaria and there is a free flow of movement between all major Palestinian cities, from Jenin in the north to Hebron in the south.

Notwithstanding the above, terrorist organizations in the West Bank and Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip remain active in planning, preparing and executing terrorist attacks on Israeli civilians. In 2013, 1,271 terror attacks took place in Judea and Samaria, a 110 per cent increase compared to 2012. It is also important to emphasize the change in the nature of the terror attacks. 2013 saw a 500 per cent increase in terror attacks using firearms and explosives.

In 2013, Gaza terror elements, headed by Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), continued efforts to strengthen their military capabilities, particularly increasing the size and range of their rocket arsenal (long-range rockets up to 110 km).

Much effort was also put into the building of offensive tunnels, constructed some 20 m underground and crossing the Gaza border into Israel. In 2013, two tunnels were discovered and demolished: one near Nir Oz (January 2013) and another near Ein Hashlosha (October 2013). The tunnels were constructed using approximately 24,000 concrete slabs (that were allowed by Israel into Gaza for the building of humanitarian projects) and were tall enough inside to allow people to stand fully upright as they travel along the tunnel.

The purpose of these tunnels is to allow the infiltration of terrorists from the Gaza Strip into Israeli civilian villages and cities in order to carry out terror attacks.

Hamas invests tens of millions of dollars into the construction of these terror tunnels, instead of investing the money in schools, civilian industry and employment.

In 2013, Hamas rule of terror in Gaza has committed crimes not only towards Israelis and towards Palestinians living in Gaza, but also towards United Nations staff. The latest UNRWA report describes the torture of an UNRWA staff member by Hamas in Gaza.

Notwithstanding its support for UNRWA humanitarian activities, Israel remains concerned by the political motivation of the aforesaid resolutions and is disturbed by the fact that they present a one-sided view which fails to reflect the reality on the ground.

As a derivative of the political nature of these resolutions, UNRWA took upon itself to promote the Palestinian narrative and to use humanitarian funding for the purpose of advocacy. There is no shortage of advocacy organizations for the Palestinian cause and Israel strongly objects to blunt misuse by UNRWA of the funds the international community donates for the welfare of Palestinian refugees. For example, while complaining about a serious shortage of funds and the cancellation of important humanitarian programmes, such as summer camps in Gaza, UNRWA, in its 2013 report, takes pride in its communication outreach, securing 56,238 mentions in the Arabic and English language media, and 1,083 positive mentions in Arabic and international media. This is not a role of a humanitarian organization. UNRWA is a work and relief organization and not a press outlet.

Israel supports a consolidation of UNRWA resolutions and a removal of all extraneous political language. Moreover, Israel urges the Secretary-General and UNRWA to consider, together with the concerned parties, ways in which the United Nations can enhance the manner in which it advances the welfare of the Palestinian people.

In this respect, Israel strongly supports an application of the standard principles guiding the United Nations, with respect to the treatment of refugees elsewhere, to the Palestinian situation. Specifically, the mandate of UNRWA mandate should be consistent with the standard United Nations policy on refugees. Furthermore, the mandate of UNRWA should include the active promotion in the Palestinian context of the broadly applied United Nations goals of resettlement and local integration of refugees.

While other refugee populations are not treated by UNRWA, thereby allowing for a gradual decrease in their numbers commensurate to their rehabilitation into civilian life, the Palestinian refugee population is growing at an exponential rate (from 700,000 in 1949 to 4.2 million in 2005, to 4.9 million in 2012 and due to reach 6.2 million in 2020). As the resolutions are of a political nature, UNRWA as an organization does not aspire to create a solution to the refugee problem and rehabilitate the refugees, but rather merely to "freeze" and perpetuate their current status. Those refugees (now into their fourth generation) are reliant on international aid and funds for their health, education and livelihood. The aspiration to maintain the political issue at the expense of the humanitarian needs of the refugees, as reflected in the resolutions, is also manifest on the ground: even the Palestinian Authority refuses to take responsibility for providing services to the refugee population in areas under its complete control, insisting upon UNRWA "exclusivity" in that respect.

Not only does the Palestinian Authority refuse to undertake the responsibility for alleviating some of the problems experienced by refugees residing within the territory under its control, but it also puts an additional financial burden on the organization by illegally collecting value-added tax.

According to the latest report of UNRWA, the Palestinian Authority owes the organization $89.77 million in tax returns.

7. No information has been received from Member States with regard to the request contained in paragraph 4 of General Assembly resolution 68/79.